country in the future. Apart from increasing the yield, biotechnology has a great potential in enhancing nutritive value of food crops. India can benefit from this frontier technology both in terms of increased production and enhanced nutritional quality crops. The Department of Biotechnology as well as Indian Council of Agricultural Research independently and in collaboration have initiated several research and development activities in this direction. The National Agricultural Research System is also addressing most of the concerns for meeting the food and nutritional demand of the ever-growing population through indigenous development of transgenics in various crops especially to address the problem of tolerance to biotic/abiotic stresses. To strengthen research in biotechnological application in agriculture, Government is putting renewed thrust on specially targeted traits *i.e.* resistence to insect-pests, fungal and viral diseases, tolerance to abiotic stresses. The Government has already initiated and is strengthening research in the area of Genomics in selected crops/traits keeping in view the food and nutritional security of the nation.The Network projects to be launched have concrete plans on basic and strategic research related to gene discovery, allete mining, expression profiling for important traits, validation of gene functions and capacity building and human resource development with respect to functional genomics. In order to accelerate efforts in this area, the Govt, has established recently a National Containment-cum-Quarantine facility for transgenic planting material, a Plant Virus Testing facility and an autonomous National Centre for Plant Genome Research.

Installation of telemetry system

†1217. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Meteorological Department of India is installing telemetry system in the country, especialy in thickly populated cities for the purpose of collection of accurate data regarding seismological activities;

(b) whether it is also a fact that as per the forecast made by geologists, Muzaffarpur district of Bihar including neighbouring districts have been declared as very sensitive zones like Orissa and Ahmedabad from seismological point of view;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) if so, steps taken by Government to tackle the calamity; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) Yes, madam. The India Meterological Department (IMD) has already been operating a 16 station V-SAT based telemetry system around Delhi for monitoring of local seismic activity. IMD has plans to establish similar telemetry networks in other seismically active zones of the country including, the North-East region.

(b) As per the seismic zoning map published by Bureau of Indian Standards, Muzaffarpur district of Bihar falls in seismic zone IV, which is considered to be seismically active. The adjoining districts of MuzaffarpUr also fall in seismic zones IV & V. However, major parts of Orissa fall in seismic zones II&III. The city of Ahmedabad also falls in seismic zone III. As per the seismic zoning map of the country, zone V is considered to be most severe and zone I the least.

(c) and (d) While there is no scientific technique available anywhere in the world to forecast the occurrence to earthquake with reasonable degree of accuracy in space, time and magnitude, damage caused by earthquakes to human life and property can be substantially reduced with preparedness and adopting suitable design and construction practices for building houses, as per the guidelines published by bureau of Indian Standards.

Herbal contraceptive pills

1218. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Scientists have developed World's first herbal contraceptive pills;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken to patent the drug as well as popularize it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND